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CONTROL

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SUBJECT: 2005-2006 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY
REPORT, PART I DRUGS AND CHEMICAL CONTROL DIVERSION CONTROL
- GHANA

REF: STATE 209558

[I](#)I. Summary

Ghana has taken steps to combat illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and has mounted major efforts against drug abuse. It has active enforcement, treatment, and rehabilitation programs; however, lack of resources remains a problem and suspected drug trafficking by a Member of Parliament surfaced this year. Ghana-U.S. law enforcement coordination strengthened in 2005. Interagency coordination among Ghana's law enforcement, however, remained a challenge and attempts to establish an anti-corruption unit at the Customs, Excise & Preventive Service were stalled. Ghana is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

Ghana is increasingly a transit point for illegal drugs, particularly cocaine from South America and heroin from Southeast and Southwest Asia. Europe remains the major destination, but drugs also flow to South Africa and to North America. Accra's Kotoka International Airport (KIA) is increasingly a focus for traffickers. Ports at Tema and Sekondi are also used, and border posts at Aflao (Togo) and Elubo and Sampa (Cote d'Ivoire) see significant drug trafficking activity. In 2005, Nigerian traffickers continued to strengthen their presence, and some South American narcotics rings trafficking cocaine began operating in Ghana. Trafficking has also fueled increasing domestic drug consumption. Cannabis use is increasing in Ghana as is local cultivation. Law enforcement officials have repeatedly raised concerns that narcotics rings are growing in their size, strength, organization and capacity for violence. The government has mounted significant public education programs, as well as cannabis crop substitution programs. Production of precursor chemicals is not a major problem.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2004

POLICY INITIATIVES: The Narcotics Control Board (NCB) coordinates government efforts involving counternarcotics activities. These activities include enforcement and control, education, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. The NCB's counternarcotics national strategy, the "National Plan of Action 1999/2008", was never implemented due to lack of funding. However, in 2005 the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) financed three projects: 1) the upgrade of a rehabilitation and treatment center run by REMAR, a Spanish non-governmental organization; 2) training of judges and officials of the Narcotics Control Board, Ghana Police, the Customs, Excise & Preventive Service and other agencies to combat transnational organized crime, including narcotics and associated financial crimes; and 3) a survey to measure the prevalence of drug abuse and its correlation to HIV/AIDS in Ghana. Each year since 1999, the NCB has proposed to amend the 1990 narcotics law to allow stricter application of bail bond system (i.e., no general granting of bail when flight is a real possibility; higher sureties to assure that defendants appear for trial) and to fund NCB operations using a portion of seized proceeds, but the Attorney General's office has not acted on these proposals. The NCB also called for amendment of PNDC Law 236 (1990) to enable it to confiscate property and assets purchased by identified drug dealers using illegal proceeds.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Figures for 2005 show an 11 percent increase in narcotics arrests (782 for January through September 2005 compared to 705 for the same period in 2004). More than 80 percent of these arrests are for cannabis. Despite the upward trend in arrests, the amount of cocaine seized remained steady while that of heroin dropped to one tenth of its 2004 level. The NCB said narcotics rings find trafficking cocaine to Europe easier and more profitable than obtaining heroin from the Far East and trafficking it to the U.S. The Ghana Police Service's campaign to destroy cannabis farms in the Upper East and Eastern Regions accounted for a nearly 18-fold increase in seizures in 2005. Overall, 2005 saw the highest number of drug trafficking

arrests on record. The NCB and other law enforcement agencies continued their successful cooperation with U.S. law enforcement agencies in 2005, sharing information, as well as extraditing American citizen Carmella Warren, who had previously escaped imprisonment in Ghana. In turn, Ghana extradited two Ghanaian citizens, Elizabeth Owusu Manu and Evans Kwesi Atta, to be tried in the United States for narcotics offenses. The January 2004 interception of 588 kilograms of cocaine in Tema, Ghana's major port city about 20 km from the capital city, represents one of the best examples of interagency cooperation between the Narcotics Control Board, the Ghana Police Service, and British intelligence. Each of the six suspects, five of whom were foreign nationals, were convicted in October 2004 and sentenced to no less than 10 years' imprisonment. In one of the largest drug busts of 2005, Ghana Police arrested two suspected narcotics ring members claiming Venezuelan citizenship on November 12 in Mpaesem, Ghana. The police seized 580 kilograms of cocaine.

The NCB's national drug education efforts continued in schools and churches, heightening citizens' awareness of the fight against narcotics and traffickers. In 2005, the NCB continued broadcasting TV programs to explain narcotics' effects on the human body, individual users and society, which are being broadcast on state television in local languages. On June 26, the NCB organized an event in Cape Coast to highlight drug abuse in Ghana in conjunction with the UN's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Trafficking. In October and November 2004, using Department of State funding, U.S. Department of Justice ICITAP trainers conducted a four-week counternarcotics training course in Ghana for thirty officers from the Ghana Narcotics Control Board, Ghana Police Service, Ghana Immigration Service, the Customs and Excise Protective Service, and the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority. The train-the-trainer program, conducted in two 2-week sessions, focused mainly on drug interdiction at air and seaports and was declared highly successful and received widespread press coverage. In 2005, 13 security agency officials also attended training in narcotics enforcement operations and airport and seaport interdiction at the Regional Drug Law Enforcement Training Center in Jos, Nigeria. In August 2005, the U.S. government signed an agreement to provide Ghana's law enforcement agencies with an additional \$200,000 in assistance to fight narcotics trafficking.

LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS: In 2005, Ghanaian law enforcement agencies continued to conduct joint police/NCB operations against narcotics cultivators, traffickers, and abusers. NCB agents, who are not armed, rely upon the police's Criminal Investigative Division's (CID) narcotics unit in situations requiring armed force. The Ghana Police Service has assigned several investigators to narcotics cases, holds suspects in its cells and prepares such cases for docket. The NCB continued to work with DHL, UPS, and Federal Express to intercept packages containing narcotics. The NCB reported that from January to September 2005 arrests rose by 40 percent for cocaine and 20 percent for cannabis compared to the same period the prior year. Meanwhile, arrests for heroin dropped to nearly one-third of their 2004 level. (See "Accomplishments" regarding trends in seizures.)

The NCB reported that prices of cocaine, heroin and cannabis remained steady. In 2005, a gram of cocaine sold for cedis 168,350 (\$18.50 at the current exchange rate). A cocaine booster sold for cedis 12,000 (\$1.32), while crack cocaine sold for cedis 5,000 (\$.55). A gram of heroin sold for cedis 145,600 (\$16). A heroin booster sold for cedis 10,000 (\$1.10). The price of a small parcel of cannabis in 2005 was approximately cedis 5,000 (\$.55), while a wrapper or joint sold for cedis 1,000 (\$.11). Successful interdiction efforts increased these prices temporarily, but the NCB said they fluctuated near this level throughout the year.

CORRUPTION: Despite the regular arrests of suspected narcotics traffickers, Ghana has an extremely low rate of conviction, which law enforcement officials indicate is likely due to corruption within the judicial system. The backlog of cases pending trial and the limited resources facing the judiciary remain problems in controlling drug trafficking in Ghana.

The Customs, Excise & Prevention Service (CEPS) says finding a location away from its headquarters, a search that had been underway for several months at the time of this report, has kept it from establishing an internal affairs unit.

On October 9, a supervisor of KIA's cargo handling company was arrested attempting to smuggle cocaine using an airport tractor and his unusual access to an airplane. Media outlets alleged that this occurred with either the approval or the involvement of ruling party officials.

On November 11, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers arrested Eric Amoateng, a Member of Ghana's Parliament, during the seizure of 62 kilograms of heroin. Amoateng has been provisionally charged and arraigned and is expected to face trial on drug trafficking charges in the U.S. NCB officials complain that courts often release suspected smugglers, including foreign nationals, on bail that is often set at only a tiny fraction of the value of

the drugs found in a suspect's possession. The court requirement of a surety in addition to bail is often either dropped, or court registrars will fraudulently use the identical property as surety for multiple cases.

In September 2004, the NCB was held in contempt of court for withholding the passports of suspects charged with drug trafficking who had been released on bail. The NCB retained the passports while they waited for the Attorney General to file a request not to permit bail, which was ultimately never filed. The NCB eventually had to turn over the passports on a court order. At least one of the suspects in this case, a Ghanaian citizen possessing a Dutch passport, has since traveled in and out of Ghana while on bail. In August 2005, the Attorney General's office filed an appeal to protest a retiring judge's acquittal of two of these suspected traffickers.

In 2004 and 2005, there were no cases of alleged evidence tampering. In August 2004, four police officers were arraigned and charged with taking bribes from drug traffickers in October 2001. On April 30, the Ghana Police interdicted two policemen who allegedly facilitated a suspected Nigerian drug trafficker's escape from custody. On May 27, the Ghana Police Criminal Investigations Division took into custody two suspected traffickers and four policemen who allegedly demanded a \$60,000 bribe to release the traffickers when they first encountered them with narcotics. On June 14, all six were granted bail.

AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES: Ghana is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol. U.S.-Ghana extradition relations are governed by the 1931 U.S.-U.K. Extradition Treaty. Additionally, Ghana is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol Agreement, which includes an extradition provision among member states. In 2003, Ghana signed a bilateral Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with the United States.

CULTIVATION AND PRODUCTION: Cannabis (also known as Indian hemp) is widely cultivated in rural farmlands. The Volta, Brong/Ahafo, Western, and Ashanti regions are principal growing areas. Most is consumed locally; some is trafficked to neighboring and European countries. Cannabis is usually harvested in September and October, and law enforcement teams increase their surveillance and investigation efforts at these times. In 2005, combined NCB and police teams continued to investigate cannabis production and distribution, and to destroy cultivated cannabis farms and plants. In October 2005, a joint-operation between the NCB and police destroyed three acres of cannabis in Akatsi and took two Ghanaians and two Jamaicans into custody. In February 2003, the NCB implemented a pilot program designed to reduce the area under cultivation, under which 140 marijuana cultivators volunteered to give up marijuana in exchange for government assistance with planting and processing new food crops and immunity from prosecution. The NCB expanded the program from 120 farmers in 2004 to 325 in 2005. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs also donated two cassava processing plants to the Essam, Eastern Region community to provide alternative income to farmers growing cannabis.

DRUG FLOW/TRANSIT: Cocaine and heroin are the main drugs that transit Ghana. Cocaine is sourced mainly from South America and destined for Europe, while heroin comes mainly from Southeast and Southwest Asia on its way to Europe and North America. Cannabis is shipped primarily to Europe, specifically to the United Kingdom. Narcotics are sometimes repackaged in Ghana for reshipment, and the most lucrative concealment method uses carry-on, wheeled luggage. Drug traffickers have grown increasingly inventive. In November 2004, British Customs and Excise seized 23 kilograms of cocaine hidden in live snails from Ghana at London's Heathrow Airport. Investigators have found cocaine packed as fish and packaged cannabis concealed in smocks and sacks of processed cassava.

Although there is no hard evidence that drugs transiting Ghana contribute significantly to the supply of drugs to the U.S. market, there are indications that direct shipments to the United States are on the rise. Accra is an increasingly important transshipment point from Africa. In November 2004, two alleged leaders of a drug smuggling ring from Ghana were indicted in Columbus, Ohio for shipping heroin for distribution across central Ohio, indicating a direct flow of illicit narcotics from Ghana into the U.S. Midwest. The November 11 arrest of a Ghanaian parliamentarian indicated a similar flow of heroin to the New York area. In the past, direct flights from Accra played an important role in the transshipment of heroin to the U.S. by West African trafficking organizations. In July 2004, the Federal Aviation Administration banned Ghana's only direct flights to the United States for safety reasons. However, this did not appear to reduce the trafficking of drugs between the two countries. Instead, drug traffickers rerouted the flow through Europe, according to the NCB. On October 9, the NCB arrested a cargo handling supervisor attempting to smuggle 12 kilograms of cocaine through the country's sole international airport. Combined with almost weekly arrests

of mules and airline complaints, this arrest raises concerns about the volume of narcotics transited by air through Ghana. The NCB reports that narcotics air transit through Ghana has reduced somewhat in favor of land routes to Abidjan, largely due to the break down of law and order in Cote d'Ivoire, which favors narcotics traffickers. The biggest challenge in Ghana, however, is the unpatrolled coastline.

DOMESTIC PROGRAMS: The NCB works with schools, professional training institutions, churches, local governments, and the general public to reduce local drug consumption. The Ministries of Health and Education further coordinate their efforts through their representatives on the Board. Board Members and staff frequently host public lectures, participate in radio discussion programs, and encourage newspaper articles on the dangers of drug abuse and trafficking. Ghana observed the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26, in Cape Coast, Central Region. Although treatment programs have lagged behind preventative education and enforcement due to lack of funding, there are three government psychiatric hospitals receiving drug patients, and three private facilities in Accra, run by local NGOs, also assisting drug abusers.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

U.S. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: The USG's counternarcotics and anticrime goals in Ghana are to strengthen Ghanaian law enforcement capacity generally, to improve interdiction capacities, to enhance the NCB's office and field operation functions, and to reduce Ghana's role as a transit point for narcotics.

BILATERAL COOPERATION: In 2002, the United States provided the Government of Ghana counternarcotics assistance in the form of surveillance and detection equipment, worth \$64,000, including two narcotics detection devices ("Itemizers") installed at Kotoka International Airport in December 2003. Similar equipment funded in FY 2000 and FY 2001 is effectively maintained and has facilitated a number of drug arrests and seizures. Funding provided in FY 2002 for training for the Police will continue to assist in suppressing corruption and strengthening the capacity of the police to interdict illegal drugs. A four-week, interagency counternarcotics training course, funded by the U.S. in FY 2002 and focused on drug interdiction at Ghana's air and seaports, took place in November 2004. Future assistance, committed in August 2005, will focus on advanced narcotics investigations skills, airport interdiction and financial crimes investigations.

THE ROAD AHEAD: The USG's major policy goals are improved narcotics interdiction, investigative capabilities, and prosecutorial successes. Tougher confiscation provisions, with a portion of such resources dedicated to fighting narcotics trafficking, would strengthen Ghana's anti-narcotics regime. Better oversight of financial transactions is particularly important given the potential for any narcotics financial networks to be used by terrorist organizations or for internal corruption.

PAMELA E. BRIDGEWATER